



Weekly Hot News Update

September 18, 2008

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On the Hill

Here's what we're tracking this week for EUCOM.

Bills of Interest:

HR 1585 - National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2008

- This bill would establish and fund counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan.
- Pocket vetoed by the President on December 31, 2007.
- Agreed to by a voice vote in the House on January 15.

HR 2003 - Ethiopia Democracy and Accountability Act of 2007

- This bill would encourage and facilitate consolidation of security, human rights, democracy, and economic freedom in Ethiopia. This would include counter terrorism and counter narcotics efforts.
- This bill was introduced in the House and referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.
- This bill was received in the Senate and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations, after passage in the House on October 3.

HR 2228 - Ethiopia Freedom, Democracy and Human Rights Bill

- Closely related to HR 2003 this bill would also encourage the development of Ethiopia while also implementing counter terrorism and counter narcotics efforts.
- This bill was introduced in the House and referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

HR 2446 - Afghanistan Freedom and Security Support Act of 2007

- This bill provides funding for programs to stabilize Afghanistan and counter the drug trade.
- This bill passed the House and was sent to the Senate, which referred it to the Committee on Foreign Relations. Star Print ordered July 17, 2007.

HR 2764 - Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008

- This bill includes appropriations for "international narcotics control and law enforcement."
- Became public law on December 26, 2007. Public Law No. 110-161.

Hearings of Interest:

There are no hearings of interest scheduled this week.

Whispers from Congress:

10 Days to Go... Then What? Congress seems to be in an all-out sprint towards the finish line to complete its business so members can head out on the campaign trail. But, after all of the votes are tallied on Election Day, what will happen then? Will Congress come back to DC and finish its remaining business or wait until the new year, when the new Administration is sworn-in, to complete its legislative work? While the jury is still out, indications are beginning to point to a short "lame duck" session in November and/or December to finish several items, including a disaster relief package and possibly an economic stimulus package. However, the FY 2009 spending bills look to remain off the table until the new Administration takes office and the 111th Congress begins.

Inside the Administration

The House Armed Services Committee held a hearing on Wednesday, September 10, where Secretary Robert M Gates, Admiral Mullen, Ambassador Edelman and Vice Admiral Winnefeld testified and presented updated information regarding the current Security and Stability in Afghanistan and Iraq. Both Republican and Democrat Representatives were quite critical and inquisitive of DoD, questioning whether the current strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan is making any difference at all. Secretary Gates stated that the United States is, “reducing our commitments in Iraq and we are increasing our commitments in Afghanistan.” A vast number of subjects were discussed throughout the hearing, which included the status of The Sons of Iraq and the Afghan National Security Forces, the spending of SERPA funds, the troop withdraw from Iraq, the counter-narcotic fight in Afghanistan, the problems coming from the Pakistani border, and many additional topics. Look for Congress to continue sharply questioning the Administration on its Iraq and Afghan strategy throughout the coming months and as members anticipate November’s elections.

Washington Influences

In his weekly column in the World Defense Review, noted African security expert, Dr. J. Peter Pham has just penned an article on the importance of engaging maritime Africa. While much of the article is a review of past and current USG maritime-based programs in Africa, a number of points within the text are worth noting. The issues discussed in the article are not only relevant to a variety of missions but increasingly important both as Africa’s maritime domain becomes more important to US interests and as an area of in need of constant security buildup. As a matter of fact, the lessons, concepts and concerns regarding African maritime security are equally applicable to portions of Europe as well, particularly the eastern Mediterranean (which looms as a largely unpatrolled sector under growing threat of transnational criminality, human-trafficking and terror migration between North Africa, Europe and the Middle East). In the article, Dr. Pham highlights the successes of past USG initiatives in African designed to build African coastal strength, the most prominent of these being the APS. Interestingly, the phrase “large-ungoverned spaces,” is often used when describing the vast, harsh and under-populated African interior. The phrase could also easily apply to African coasts as well; the pervasive lack of coastal security forces and maritime defense is a major factor behind the constant exploitation of African territory by maritime drug traffickers and pirates. The article also brings to light the critical need for coastal defense to maintain to energy security. As the US becomes more and more dependant on Africa for sources of energy, especially those along the Western coasts, the more US policy will have to address these issues. Dr. Pham also details how maritime and coastal based security platforms can extend their reach, in an amphibious fashion, to bolster security beyond the beaches and coasts; this is a point of major significance based on how events on African coasts greater impact situations further inland.

To view the entire article, please access the following link.

<http://worlddefensereview.com/pham091608.shtml>

Around the Corner

Numerous worldwide events of last week, if nothing else, have reinforced the idea that, regardless of moves to bolster security, transnational threats will still attempt to breach the protective firewalls in place. The bombing of the US embassy in Yemen and another attack on a Niger Delta oil flow station by MEND both have global repercussions in terms of stability and security. The good guys made a few points last week as well. The US-led interception of a semi-submersible craft with \$187 million USD worth of cocaine and a massive USG/European mafia crackdown on both sides of the Atlantic are the most high-profile occurrences. The latter event is worth taking a better look at simply because it indicates a new trend in the global drug trade. In the joint DEA/FBI/Italian police operation, over 200 suspects were

arrested after nearly 6 months worth of investigation. In the end, it was confirmed that many members of the 'Ndrangheta crime family, known for its close collaboration with South American DTO's, were moving Colombian cocaine into Europe through Mexico. Several operations, all part of a larger operational strategy, not only resulted in the arrests of hundreds of Italian and Mexican thugs but ended up with the seizure of over \$60 million USD in cash, hundreds of guns, and tens of thousands of pounds worth of illicit drugs. Most importantly, the operation exposed the connections between a European based criminal organization, (heavily involved in the drugs trade), and the very same Mexican drug cartels that have been responsible for thousands of murders in Mexico over the last two years, including the deaths of legions of Mexican police and an American CBP officer. All of this is to say that in the world of globalized criminality, international drug trading and terrorism, anything is possible...continual operations and increasing evidence support the notion that transnational criminals operate with out barriers or borders. Even if the connections defy traditions, past trends and don't conform to conventional wisdom, it doesn't mean their not at work. Put another way, the greater the potential for profit or operational ease, the greater the chances that underground operators will saddle up with each other, regardless of motive, background or typical behavior. It must be asked, "What's to stop some of these groups with finding other opportunities for profit, other groups to collude with and other networks to exploit?" While all of these events are in the recent past tense, the key will be to learn from them and look ahead to any possible future scenario with a different perspective. TCG will remain energized and on the hunt.

[Selected News for EUCOM](#)

- [Major Drug Cartel Busted in Albania](#)
- [200 Held in Italy-US Narco-Bust](#)
- [Greek Police Arrest Brit for Khat Trafficking](#)
- [Drug Abuse Growing in Developing Countries, UN Warns](#)
- [Nigeria's MEND Says it Destroyed Shell Flow Station](#)
- [Amphetamine Use Increases in East](#)
- [Coast Guard Nabs Drug-Toting Semi-Submersible](#)

[The Lighter Side](#)

[Quote of the Week](#)

"Perseverance is the hard work you do after you get tired of doing the hard work you already did."

Newt Gingrich

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

Winston Churchill

[Prediction of the Week](#)

With the housing and banking markets in turmoil and the stock market feeling the ill effects, look for both Senators Obama and McCain to focus their campaign speeches on these matters over the next several weeks.

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